

# Organ Pipe Cactus

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Organ Pipe Cactus  
National Monument

## Are You Aware.....?



*This concentration of trash is evidence that the area is heavily used by illegal immigrants.*

Organ Pipe Cactus is an attractive place – and not just for scenery. Every year thousands of people are attracted to this remote location to illegally enter the United States. We want you to enjoy your visit to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, but it is important for you to be aware of your surroundings.

Not all visitors are legal	They may come from Mexico, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and the rest of the world.	They come for a variety of reasons – to find work, to bypass immigration laws, to smuggle illegal drugs.
At Sea in the Desert	Most illegal immigrants are unprepared for the rigors of crossing the Sonoran Desert. They may carry a few possessions, a little food, and some water. They are unaware they are crossing a national monument, a place dedicated to	preservation of the Sonoran Desert for future generations. They may be unsure of their exact route, and merely follow the footsteps of others. As a result, the monument is laced with hundreds of miles of unofficial routes.
Monumental Damage	These illegal routes are lined with empty water jugs and other discarded items. Illegal immigrants frequently rest or camp under the trees, the very same places where cactus seedlings germinate. Immigrants collect wood and build small cooking fires. These fires can also cook shallow cactus roots. Trash left at these sites is	not only unsightly, it is unsanitary and attracts a variety of scavengers. Nearby watersources are often so fouled by pollution that wildlife can no longer use them. Some overnight rest stops are so heavily used that the damage is extensive. During the rainy seasons, trails and vehicle routes become avenues for floodwaters, further increasing the resource damage.
Potential danger	As a result of illegal immigrants crossing our borders, other unlawful acts do occur within the monument. Some of the illegal entrants are armed, dangerous, and determined to complete the trip at any cost. Most often these are	smugglers and drugrunners. They may drive a stolen vehicle or they may hire human “mules” to carry their contraband in homemade backpacks.
Be Aware, Be Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Remember that cell phone service is usually not available within Monument boundaries.</li><li>Know where you are at all times. Follow good safety procedures and use common sense.</li><li>Do not pick up hitch-hikers.</li><li>Keep valuables out of sight and lock your vehicle at all times.</li><li>Avoid traveling on well-used but unofficial trails.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Avoid hiking or camping in areas of major border activity. Monument staff can help you plan your backcountry camping experience.</li><li>People in distress may ask for food and water. Use good judgment in providing water; provide nothing else, and contact monument staff or U.S. Border Patrol as soon as possible.</li><li>Report any suspicious activity (including campground activity) to monument staff immediately. Do not contact suspicious persons. Contact a ranger for help.</li></ul>